

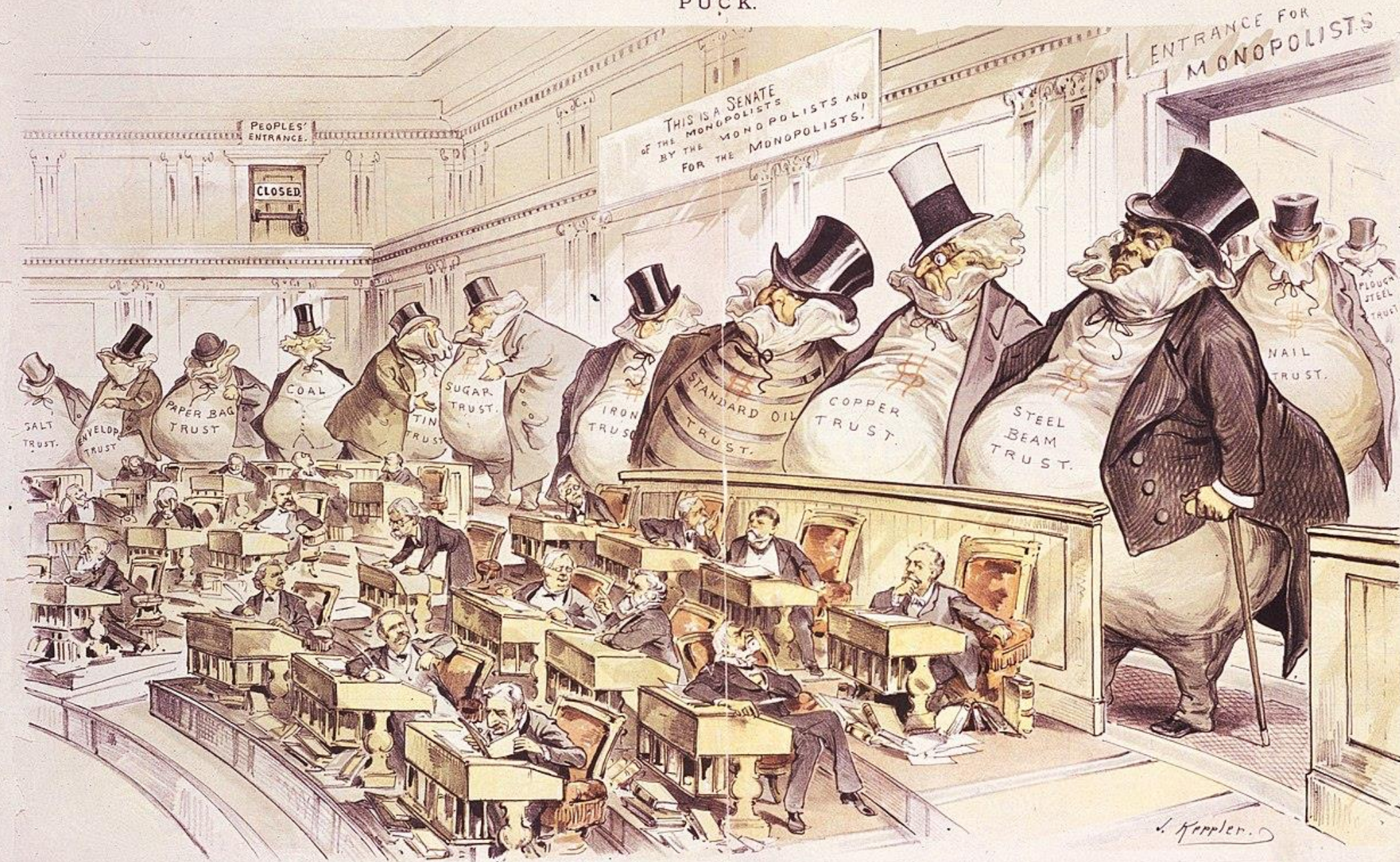


THE GILDED AGE



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PUCK.



THE BOSSES OF THE SENATE.

GILDED AGE



Elizabeth Winthrop Chanler



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GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899



In United States history, the Gilded Age is the period from about the late 1870s to the late 1890s, which occurred between the Reconstruction era and the Progressive Era. It was named by 1920s historians after Mark Twain's 1873 novel *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*. Historians saw late 19th-century economic expansion as a time of materialistic excesses marked by **widespread political corruption**.

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It was a time of rapid economic growth, especially in the Northern and Western United States. As American wages grew much higher than those in Europe, especially for skilled workers, and industrialization demanded an increasingly skilled labor force, the period saw an influx of millions of European immigrants. **The rapid expansion of industrialization led to real wage growth of 40% from 1860 to 1890** and spread across the increasing labor force. The average annual wage per industrial worker (including men, women, and children) rose from \$380 in 1880 (\$12,381 in 2024 dollars) to \$584 in 1890 (\$19,738 in 2024 dollars), a gain of 59%. The Gilded Age was also an era of poverty, especially in the South, and growing inequality, as millions of immigrants poured into the United States, and the high concentration of wealth became more visible and contentious.

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Railroads were the major growth industry, with the factory system, oil, mining, and finance increasing in importance. Immigration from Europe and the Eastern United States led to the rapid growth of the West based on farming, ranching, and mining. Labor unions became increasingly important in the rapidly growing industrial cities. Two major nationwide depressions—the Panic of 1873 and the Panic of 1893—interrupted growth and caused social and political upheavals.

The South remained economically devastated after the American Civil War; the region's economy became increasingly tied to commodities like food and building materials, cotton for thread and fabrics, and tobacco production, all of which suffered from low prices. With the end of the Reconstruction era in 1877 and the rise of Jim Crow laws, African American people in the South were stripped of political power and voting rights, and were left severely economically disadvantaged.

The political landscape was notable in that despite rampant corruption, election turnout was comparatively high among all classes (though the extent of the franchise was generally limited to men), and national elections featured two similarly sized parties. The dominant issues were cultural (especially regarding prohibition, education, and ethnic or racial groups) and economic (tariffs and money supply). Urban politics were tied to rapidly growing industrial cities, which increasingly fell under control of political machines.

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In business, powerful nationwide trusts formed in some industries. Unions crusaded for the eight-hour working day, and the abolition of child labor; middle-class reformers demanded civil service reform, prohibition of liquor and beer, and women's suffrage.

Local governments across the North and West built public schools chiefly at the elementary level; public high schools started to emerge. The numerous religious denominations were growing in membership and wealth, with Catholicism becoming the largest. They all expanded their missionary activity to the world arena. Catholics, Lutherans, and Episcopalians set up religious schools, and the largest of those schools set up numerous colleges, hospitals, and charities. Many of the problems faced by society, especially the poor, gave rise to attempted reforms in the subsequent Progressive Era.

The term Gilded Age was applied to the era by 1920s historians who took the term from one of Mark Twain's lesser-known novels, The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today (1873). The book (co-written with Charles Dudley Warner) satirized the promised "golden age" after the Civil War, portrayed as an era of serious social problems masked by a thin gold gilding of economic expansion. In the 1920s, and 1930s, the metaphor "Gilded Age" began to be applied to a designated period in American history.

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The term was adopted by literary and cultural critics as well as historians, including Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, Charles Austin Beard, Mary Ritter Beard, Vernon Louis Parrington, and Matthew Josephson. For them, Gilded Age was a pejorative term for a time of materialistic excesses and widespread political corruption.

The early half of the Gilded Age roughly coincided with the middle portion of the Victorian Era in Britain and the Belle Époque in France. With respect to eras of American history, historical views vary as to when the Gilded Age began, ranging from starting right after the Civil War ended in 1865, or 1873, or as the Reconstruction Era ended in 1877. The date marking the end of the Gilded Age also varies. The ending is generally given as the beginning of the Progressive Era in the 1890s (sometimes the United States presidential election of 1896).



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The Gilded Age was a period of economic growth as the United States jumped to the lead in industrialization ahead of Britain. The nation was rapidly expanding its economy into new areas, especially heavy industry like factories, railroads, and coal mining. In 1869, the first transcontinental railroad opened up the far-west mining and ranching regions. Travel from New York to San Francisco then took six days instead of six months. Railroad track mileage tripled from 1860 to 1880, and then doubled again by 1920. The new track linked formerly isolated areas with larger markets and allowed for the rise of commercial farming, ranching, and mining, creating a truly national marketplace. American steel production rose to surpass the combined totals of Britain, Germany, and France.

Investors in London and Paris poured money into the railroads through the American financial market centered in Wall Street. By 1900, the process of economic concentration had extended into most branches of industry—a few large corporations, called "trusts", dominated in steel, oil, sugar, meat, and farm machinery. Through vertical integration these trusts were able to control each aspect of the production of a specific good, ensuring that the profits made on the finished product were maximized and prices minimized, and by controlling access to the raw materials, prevented other companies from being able to compete in the marketplace. Several monopolies—most famously Standard Oil—came to dominate their markets by keeping prices low when competitors appeared; they grew at a rate four times faster than that of the competitive sectors. Increased mechanization of industry is a major mark of the **Gilded Age's search for cheaper ways to create more product.**



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The Four Hundred was a list of New York society during the *Gilded Age*, a group that was led by Caroline Schermerhorn Astor, the "Mrs. Astor", for many years. After her death, her role in society was filled by three women: Mamie Fish, Theresa Fair Oelrichs, and Alva Belmont, known as the *"triumvirate" of American society*.



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Frederick Winslow Taylor observed that worker efficiency in steel could be improved through the use of very close observations with a stop watch to eliminate wasted effort. Mechanization made some factories an assemblage of unskilled laborers performing simple and repetitive tasks under the direction of skilled foremen and engineers. Machine shops grew rapidly, and they comprised highly skilled workers and engineers. Both the number of unskilled and skilled workers increased, as their wage rates grew.

Engineering colleges were established to feed the enormous demand for expertise, many through the Federal government sponsored Morrill Land-Grant Acts passed to stimulate public education, particularly in the agricultural and technical ("Ag & Tech") fields. Railroads, which had previously invented railroad time to standardize time zones, production, and lifestyles, created modern management, with clear chains of command, statistical reporting, and complex bureaucratic systems. **They systematized the roles of middle managers** and set up explicit career tracks for both skilled blue-collar jobs and for white-collar managers. These advances spread from railroads into finance, manufacturing, and trade. Together with rapid growth of small business, a new middle class was rapidly growing, especially in northern cities. The nation became a world leader in applied technology. From 1860 to 1890, 500,000 patents were issued for new inventions—over ten times the number granted in the previous seventy years. George Westinghouse invented air brakes for trains (making them both safer and faster).

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Theodore Vail established the American Telephone & Telegraph Company and built a great communications network. Elisha Otis developed the elevator, allowing the construction of skyscrapers and the concentration of ever greater populations in urban centers. Thomas Edison, in addition to inventing hundreds of devices, established the first electrical lighting utility, basing it on direct current and an efficient incandescent lamp. Electric power delivery spread rapidly across Gilded Age cities. The streets were lit at night, and electric streetcars allowed for faster commuting to work and easier shopping.

Petroleum launched a new industry beginning with the Pennsylvania oil fields in the 1860s. The United States dominated the global industry into the 1950s. Kerosene replaced whale oil and candles for lighting homes. John D. Rockefeller founded Standard Oil Company and monopolized the oil industry. It mostly produced kerosene before the automobile created a demand for gasoline in the 20th century. According to historian Henry Adams the system of railroads needed: the energies of a generation, for it required all the new machinery to be created—capital, banks, mines, furnaces, shops, power-houses, technical knowledge, mechanical population, together with a steady remodelling of social and political habits, ideas, and institutions to fit the new scale and suit the new conditions. The generation from 1865 to 1895 was already mortgaged to the railways, and no one knew it better than the generation itself. The impact can be examined through five aspects: shipping, finance, management, careers, and popular reaction.

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SHIPPING FREIGHT AND PASSENGERS

Railroads provided a highly efficient network for shipping freight and passengers throughout the U.S., spurring the evolution of a large national market. This had a transformative impact on most sectors of the economy including manufacturing, retail and wholesale, agriculture, and finance. The result was an integrated market practically the size of Europe's, with no internal barriers, tariffs, or language barriers to hamper it, and a common financial and legal system to support it.

Basis of the private financial system

Railroad financing provided the basis for a dramatic expansion of the private financial system.

Construction of railroads was far more expensive than factories. In 1860, the combined total of railroad stocks and bonds was \$1.8 billion; 1897, it reached \$10.6 billion (compared to a total national debt of \$1.2 billion). Funding came primarily from private finance throughout the Northeast, and from Europe, especially Britain, with about 10 percent coming from the Federal government, especially in the form of land grants that could be realized when a certain amount of trackage was opened. The emerging American financial system was based on railroad bonds. By 1860, New York was the dominant financial market. The British invested heavily in railroads around the world, but nowhere more so than the United States; The total came to about \$3 billion by 1914. In 1914–1917, they liquidated their American assets to pay for war supplies.

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INVENTING MODERN MANAGEMENT

Railroad management designed complex systems that could handle far more complicated simultaneous relationships than could be dreamed of by the local factory owner who could patrol every part of his own factory in a matter of hours. Civil engineers became the senior management of railroads. The leading innovators were the Western Railroad of Massachusetts and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in the 1840s, the Erie in the 1850s, and the Pennsylvania in the 1860s.

CAREER PATHS

The railroads invented the career path in the private sector for both blue- and white-collar workers. Railroading became a lifetime career for young men; women were rarely hired. A typical career path would see a young man hired at age 18 as a shop laborer and promoted to skilled mechanic at age 24, brakeman at 25, freight conductor at 27, and passenger conductor at age 57. White-collar career paths likewise were delineated. Educated young men started in clerical or statistical work and moved up to station agents or bureaucrats at the divisional or central headquarters.

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At each level they had more and more knowledge, experience, and human capital. They were very hard to replace and were virtually guaranteed permanent jobs and provided with insurance and medical care. Hiring, firing, and wage rates were set not by foremen, but by central administrators, to minimize favoritism and personality conflicts. Everything was done by the book, whereby an increasingly complex set of rules dictated to everyone exactly what should be done in every circumstance, and exactly what their rank and pay would be. By the 1880s the career railroaders were retiring, and pension systems were invented to provide for them.

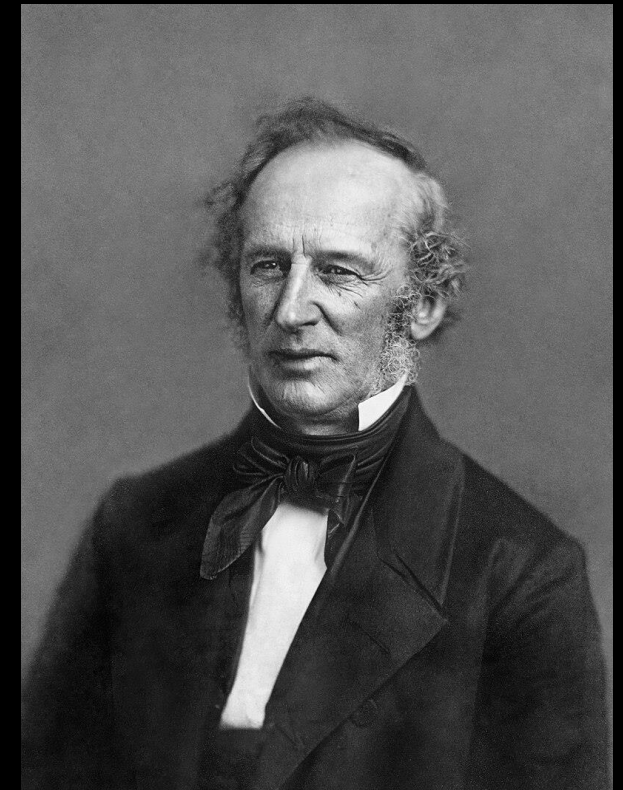
RAILROAD CONTROVERSY

America developed a love-hate relationship with railroads. Boosters in every city worked feverishly to make sure the railroad came through, knowing their urban dreams depended upon it. The mechanical size, scope, and efficiency of the railroads made a profound impression; people dressed in their Sunday best to go down to the terminal to watch the train come in. Travel became much easier, cheaper, and more common. Shoppers from small towns could make day trips to big city stores. Hotels, resorts, and tourist attractions were built to accommodate the demand. The realization that anyone could buy a ticket for a thousand-mile trip was empowering. Historians Gary Cross and Rick Szostak argue.

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Cornelius Vanderbilt versus James Fisk Jr. in a famous rivalry with the Erie Railroad



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With the freedom to travel came a greater sense of national identity and a reduction in regional cultural diversity. Farm children could more easily acquaint themselves with the big city, and easterners could readily visit the West. It is hard to imagine a United States of continental proportions without the railroad.

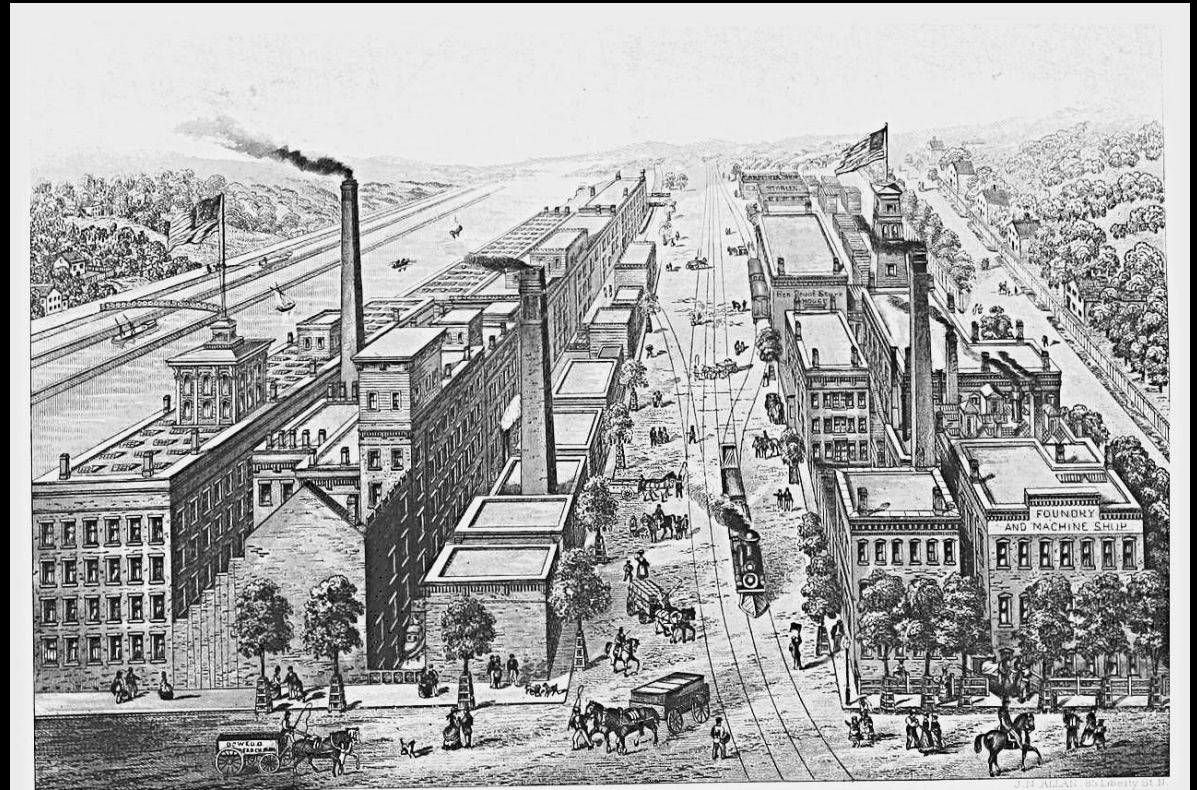
The civil and mechanical engineers became model citizens, bringing their can-do spirit and their systematic work effort to all phases of the economy as well as local and national government.[34] By 1910, major cities were building magnificent palatial railroad stations, such as the Pennsylvania Station in New York City, and the Union Station in Washington, D.C.

But there was also a dark side. By the 1870s railroads were vilified by Western farmers who absorbed the Granger movement theme that monopolistic carriers controlled too much pricing power, and that the state legislatures had to regulate maximum prices. Local merchants and shippers supported the demand and got some "Granger Laws" passed.[37] Anti-railroad complaints were loudly repeated in late 19th century political rhetoric.

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OSWEGO STARCH FACTORY IN OSWEGO, NEW YORK, 1876

The first European settlement at Oswego was a British trading post established in 1722, and it was first incorporated as a village in 1828 before becoming a city in 1848.



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One of the most hated railroad men in the country was Collis P. Huntington (1821–1900), the president of the Southern Pacific Railroad, who dominated California's economy and politics. One textbook argues: "Huntington came to symbolize the greed and corruption of late-nineteenth-century business. Business rivals and political reformers accused him of every conceivable evil. Journalists and cartoonists made their reputations by pillorying him.... Historians have cast Huntington as the state's most despicable villain. However Huntington defended himself: "The motives back of my actions have been honest ones and the results have redounded far more to the benefit of California than they have to my own

IMPACT ON FARMING

The growth of railroads from 1850s to 1880s made commercial farming much more feasible and profitable. Millions of acres were opened to settlement once the railroad was nearby, and provided a long-distance outlet for wheat, cattle and hogs that reached all the way to Europe. Rural America became one giant market, as wholesalers bought the consumer products produced by the factories in the East and shipped them to local merchants in small stores nationwide.

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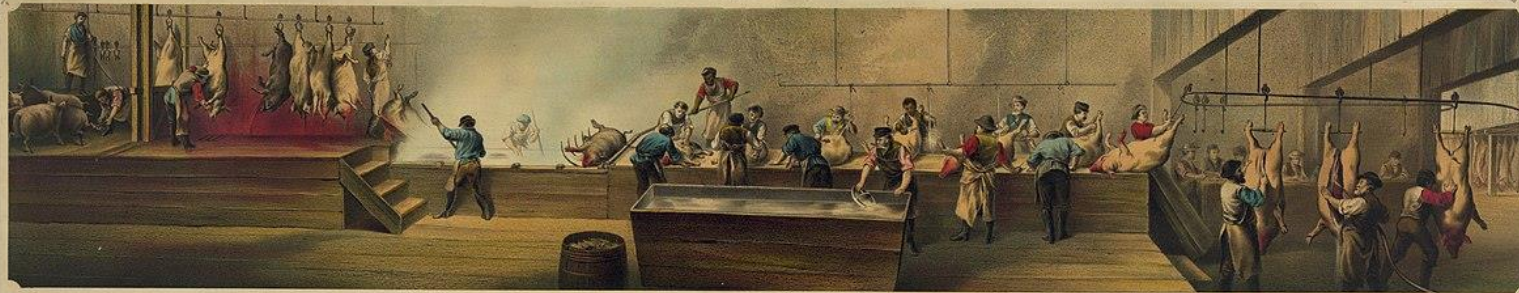
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It was more efficient to slaughter them in major packing centers such as Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Cincinnati, and then ship dressed meat out in refrigerated freight cars. The cars were cooled by slabs of ice that had been harvested from the northern lakes in wintertime and stored for summer and fall usage. Chicago, the main railroad center, benefited enormously, with Kansas City a distant second. Historian William Cronon concludes:

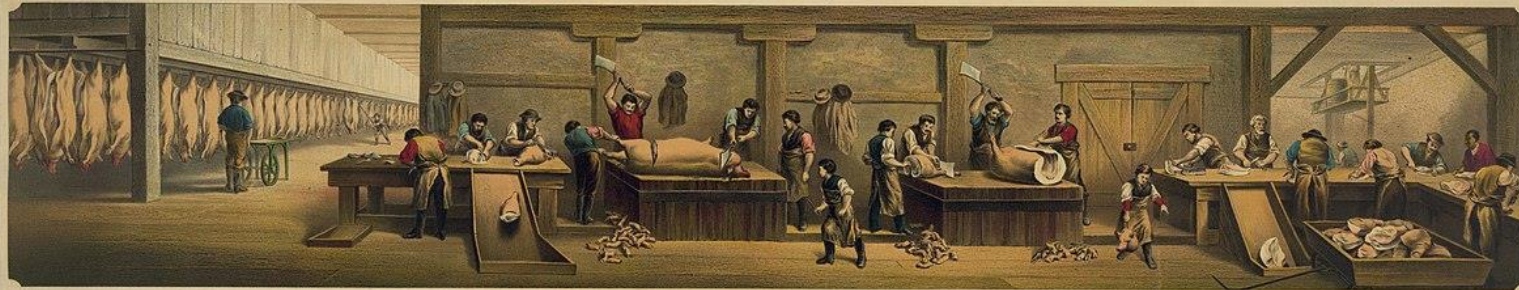
Because of the Chicago packers, ranchers in Wyoming and feedlot farmers in Iowa regularly found a reliable market for their animals, and on average received better prices for the animals they sold there. At the same time and for the same reason, Americans of all classes found a greater variety of more and better meats on their tables, purchased on average at lower prices than ever before. Seen in this light, the packers' "rigid system of economy" seemed a very good thing indeed.



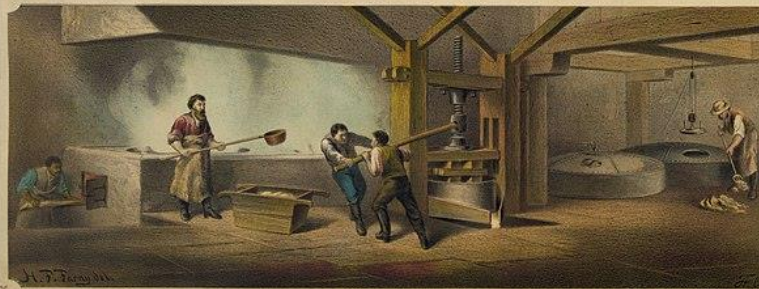
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KILLING.



CUTTING.



RENDERING.



SALTING.

PORK PACKING IN CINCINNATI.

Chromo-Lithograph of the Cartoons exhibited by the Cincinnati Pork Packers' Association, at the International Exposition, at Vienna.



PORK PACKING IN CINCINNATI, 1873



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Andrew Carnegie (November 25, 1835 – August 11, 1919) was a Scottish-American industrialist and philanthropist. Carnegie led the expansion of the American steel industry in the late-19th century and became **one of the richest Americans in history**. He became a leading philanthropist in the United States, Great Britain, and the British Empire. During the last 18 years of his life, he gave away around \$350 million (equivalent to \$10.9 billion in 2024), almost 90 percent of his fortune, to charities, foundations and universities. His 1889 article proclaiming "The Gospel of Wealth" called on the rich to use their wealth to improve society, expressed support for progressive taxation and an estate tax, and stimulated a wave of philanthropy. Carnegie was born in Dunfermline, Scotland.

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**"THE FIRST COTTON
GIN" CONJECTURAL
IMAGE FROM 1869**

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COTTON GIN

"The First Cotton Gin" conjectural image from 1869

Cotton was at first a small-scale crop in the South. Cotton farming boomed following the improvement of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney. It was 50 times more productive at removing the seeds than with a roller. Soon, large cotton plantations, based on slave labor, expanded in the richest lands from the Carolinas westward to Texas. The raw cotton was shipped to textile mills in Britain, France and New England.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the U.S. economy rose at the fastest rate in its history, with real wages, wealth, GDP, and capital formation all increasing rapidly. For example, from 1865 to 1898, the output of wheat increased by 256%, corn by 222%, coal by 800%, and miles of railway track by 567%. Thick national networks for transportation and communication were created. The corporation became the dominant form of business organization, and a scientific management revolution transformed business operations. By the beginning of the 20th century, gross domestic product and industrial production in the United States led the world. Kennedy reports that "U.S. national income, in absolute figures in per capita, was so far above everybody else's by 1914."

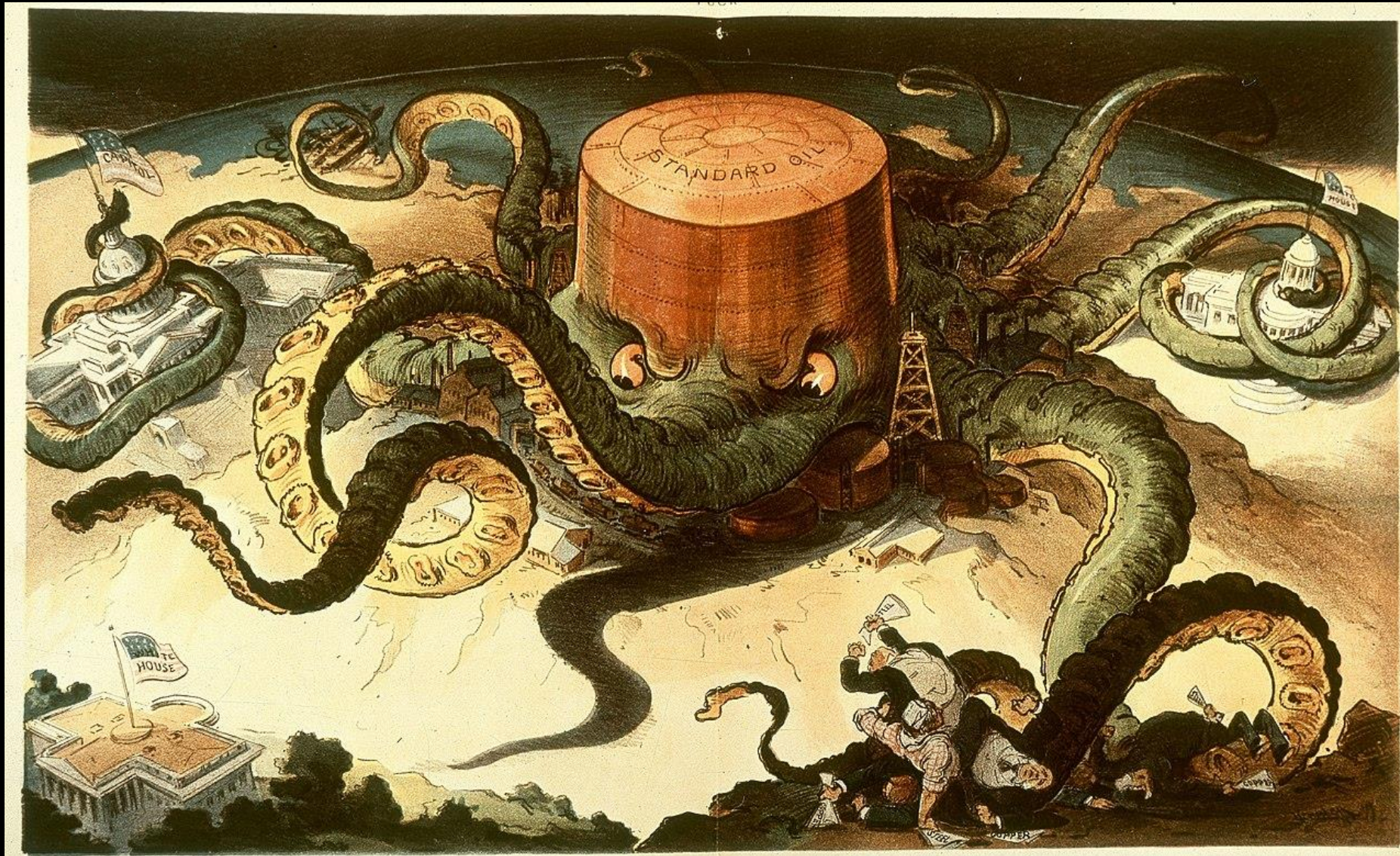
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Per capita income in the United States was \$377 in 1914 compared to Britain in second place at \$244, Germany at \$184, France at \$153, and Italy at \$108, while Russia and Japan trailed far behind at \$41 and \$36.

London remained the financial center of the world until 1914, yet the United States' growth caused foreigners to ask, as British author W. T. Stead wrote in 1901, "What is the secret of American success?" The businessmen of the Second Industrial Revolution created industrial towns and cities in the Northeast with new factories, and hired an ethnically diverse industrial working class, many of them new immigrants from Europe.

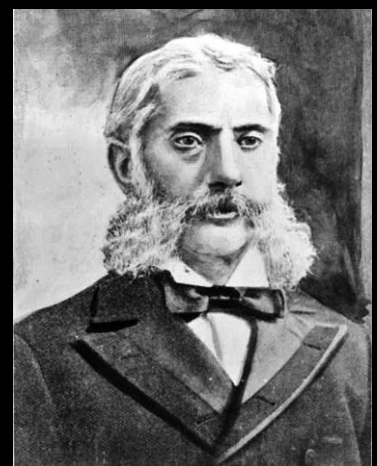
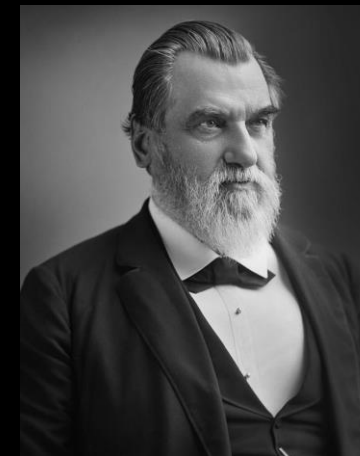
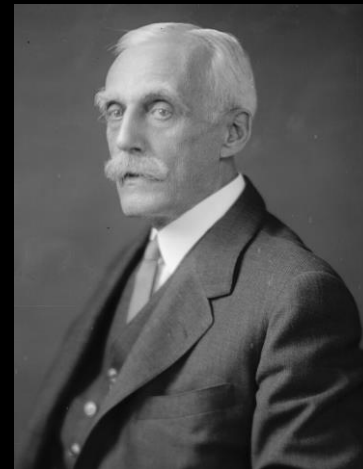
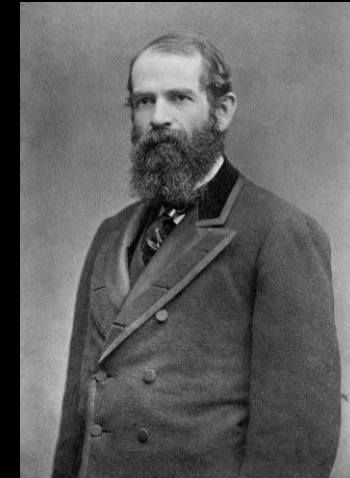
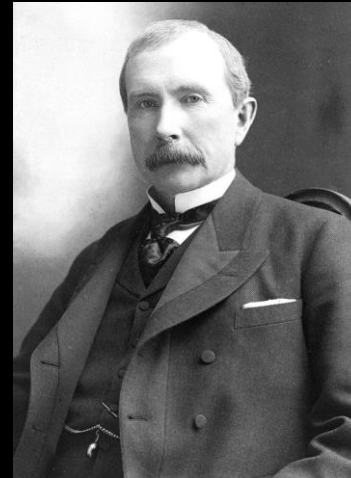
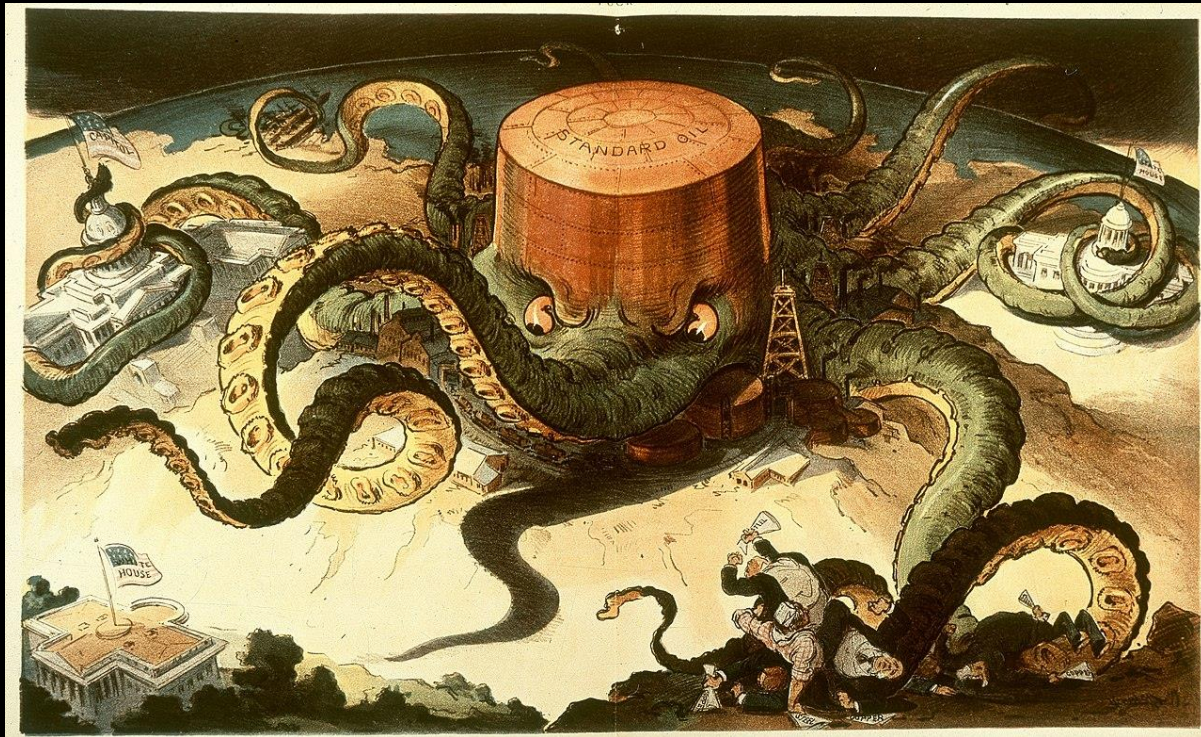
Wealthy industrialists and financiers such as John D. Rockefeller, Jay Gould, Henry Clay Frick, Andrew Mellon, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Flagler, Henry Huttleston Rogers, J. P. Morgan, Leland Stanford, Meyer Guggenheim, Jacob Schiff, Charles Crocker, and Cornelius Vanderbilt would sometimes be labeled "robber barons" by their critics, who argue their fortunes were made at the expense of the working class, by chicanery and a betrayal of democracy.

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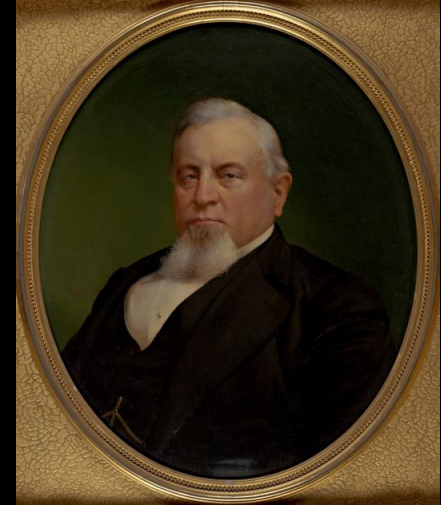
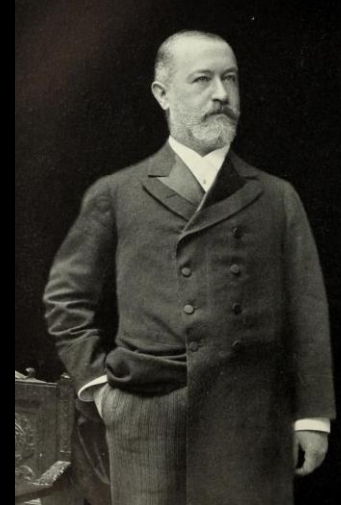
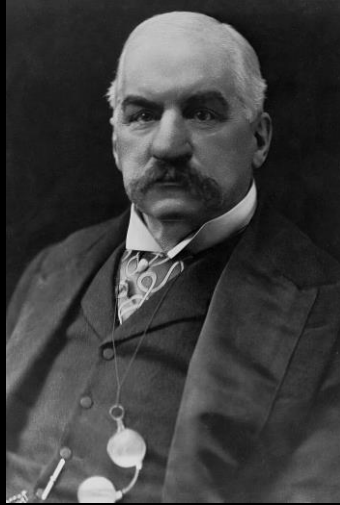
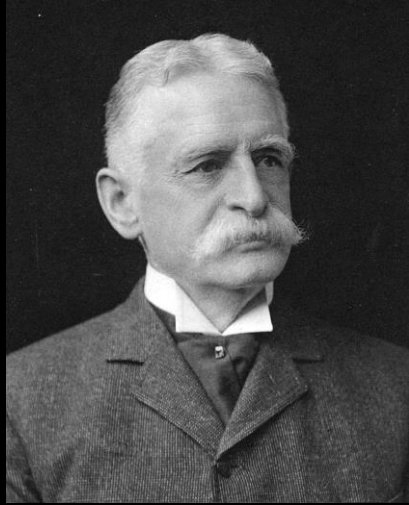
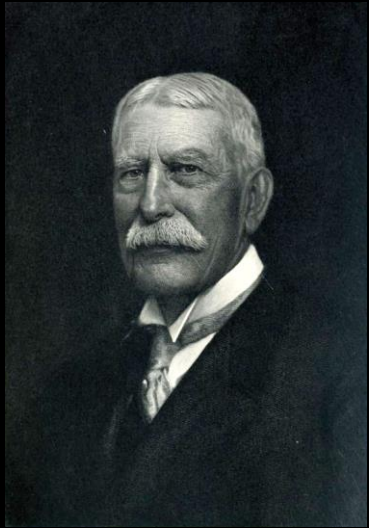


GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899

Octopus representing Standard Oil with tentacles wrapped around Congress and state capitals, as well as the steel, copper, and shipping industries, and reaching for the White House. 1904 cartoon by Udo Keppler.



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The term **robber baron** derives from the Raubritter (robber knights), the medieval German lords who charged nominally illegal tolls (unauthorized by the Holy Roman Emperor) on the primitive roads crossing their lands, or larger tolls along the Rhine river. Some of the most notorious of these were Thomas von Absberg and Götz von Berlichingen, who both made a career out of highway robbery and brigandry. The metaphor appeared as early as February 9, 1859, when The New York Times used it to characterize the business practices of Cornelius Vanderbilt. Historian T. J. Stiles says the metaphor "conjures up visions of titanic monopolists who crushed competitors, rigged markets, and **corrupted government**."

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The first such usage was against Vanderbilt, for taking money from high-priced, government-subsidized shippers, in order to not compete on their routes. Political cronies had been granted special shipping routes by the state, but told legislators their costs were so high that they needed to charge high prices and still receive extra money from the taxpayers as funding. Vanderbilt's private shipping company began running the same routes, charging a fraction of the price, making a large profit without taxpayer subsidy. The state-funded shippers then began paying Vanderbilt money to not ship on their route. A critic of this tactic drew a political comic depicting Vanderbilt as a feudal robber baron extracting a toll.

In his 1934 book *The Robber Barons: The Great American Capitalists 1861-1901*, Matthew Josephson argued that the industrialists who were called robber barons have a complicated legacy in the history of American economic and social life. In the book's original foreword, he claims the robber barons:



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"The European Svengali and the trilbys of the 'Four Hundred' – He hypnotizes 'em every time!" Illustration published in Puck, October 2, 1895.

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"more or less knowingly played the leading roles in an age of industrial revolution. Even their quarrels, intrigues and misadventures (too often treated as merely diverting or picturesque) are part of the mechanism of our history. Under their hands the renovation of our economic life proceeded relentlessly: large-scale production replaced the scattered, decentralized mode of production; industrial enterprises became more concentrated, more "efficient" technically, and essentially "coöperative," where they had been purely individualistic and lamentably wasteful. But all this revolutionizing effort is branded with the motive of private gain on the part of the new captains of industry. To organize and exploit the resources of a nation upon a gigantic scale, to regiment its farmers and workers into harmonious corps of producers, and to do this only in the name of an uncontrolled appetite for private profit—here surely is the great inherent contradiction whence so much disaster, outrage and misery has flowed."

Charles R. Geisst says, "in a Darwinist age, Vanderbilt developed a reputation as a plunderer who took no prisoners." Hal Bridges said that the term represented the idea that "business leaders in the United States from about 1865 to 1900 were, on the whole, a set of avaricious rascals who habitually cheated and robbed investors and consumers, corrupted government, fought ruthlessly among themselves, and in general carried on predatory activities comparable to those of the robber barons of medieval Europe."

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A **dramatic expansion** in farming took place during the **Gilded Age**, with the number of farms tripling from 2.0 million in 1860 to 6.0 million in 1905. The number of people living on farms grew from about 10 million in 1860 to 22 million in 1880 to 31 million in 1905. The value of farms soared from \$8.0 billion in 1860 to \$30 billion in 1906.

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Andrew Carnegie donated over 90% of his wealth and said that philanthropy was their duty—the "Gospel of Wealth". Private money endowed thousands of colleges, hospitals, museums, academies, schools, opera houses, public libraries, and charities.[51] John D. Rockefeller donated over \$500 million to various charities, slightly over half his entire net worth. Reflecting this, many business leaders were influenced by Herbert Spencer's theory of social Darwinism, which justified laissez-faire capitalism, competition and social stratification.

This emerging industrial economy quickly expanded to meet the new market demands. From 1869 to 1879, the U.S. economy grew at a rate of 6.8% for NNP (GDP minus capital depreciation) and 4.5% for NNP per capita. The economy repeated this period of growth in the 1880s, in which the wealth of the nation grew at an annual rate of 3.8%, while the GDP was also doubled. Libertarian economist Milton Friedman states that for the 1880s, "The highest decadal rate [of growth of real reproducible, tangible wealth per head from 1805 to 1950] for periods of about ten years was apparently reached in the eighties with approximately 3.8 percent."

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The rapid expansion of industrialization led to real wage growth of 60% from 1860 to 1890, spread across the increasing labor force. Real wages (adjusting for inflation) rose steadily, with the exact percentage increase depending on the dates and the specific work force. The Census Bureau reported in 1892, that the average annual wage per industrial worker (including men, women, and children) rose from \$380 in 1880 to \$564 in 1890, a gain of 48%. Economic historian Clarence D. Long estimates that (in terms of constant 1914 dollars), the average annual incomes of all American non-farm employees rose from \$375 in 1870 to \$395 in 1880, \$519 in 1890 and \$573 in 1900, a gain of 53% in 30 year.

Australian historian Peter Shergold found that the standard of living for industrial workers was higher than in Europe. He compared wages and the standard of living in Pittsburgh with Birmingham, England, one of the richest industrial cities of Europe. After taking account of the cost of living (which was 65% higher in the U.S.), he found the standard of living of unskilled workers was about the same in the two cities, while skilled workers in Pittsburgh had about 50% to 100% higher standard of living as those in Birmingham, England. Warren B. Catlin proposed that the natural resources and virgin lands that were available in America acted as a safety valve for poorer workers, hence, employers had to pay higher wages to hire labor.

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According to Shergold the American advantage grew over time from 1890 to 1914, and the perceived higher American wage led to a heavy steady flow of skilled workers from Britain to industrial America. According to historian Steve Fraser, workers generally earned less than \$800 a year, which kept them mired in poverty. Workers had to put in roughly 60 hours a week to earn this much.

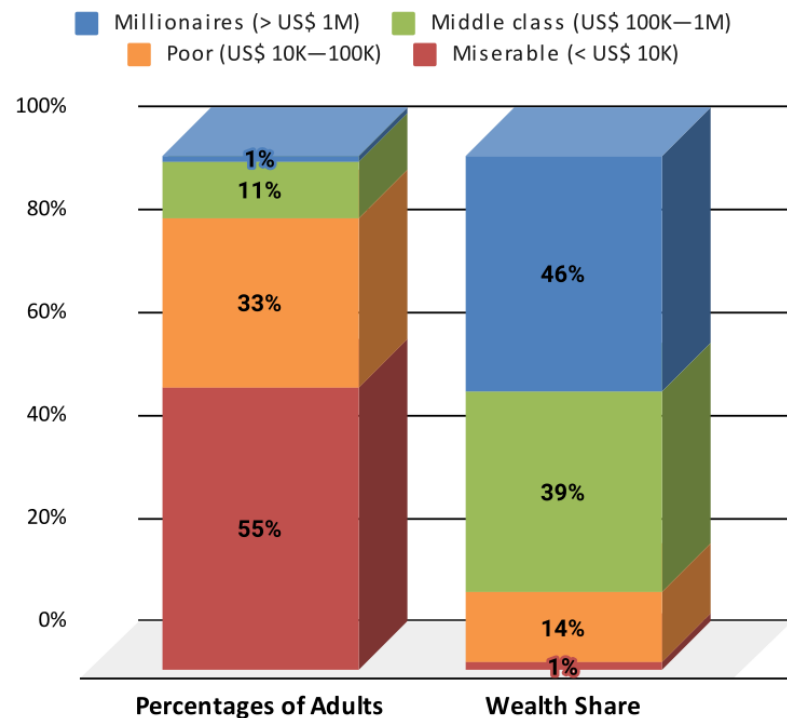
Wage labor was widely condemned as 'wage slavery' in the working class press, and labor leaders almost always used the phrase in their speeches. As the shift towards wage labor gained momentum, working class organizations became more militant in their efforts to "strike down the whole system of wages for labor." In 1886, economist and New York Mayoral candidate Henry George, author of Progress and Poverty, stated "Chattel slavery is dead, but industrial slavery remains.



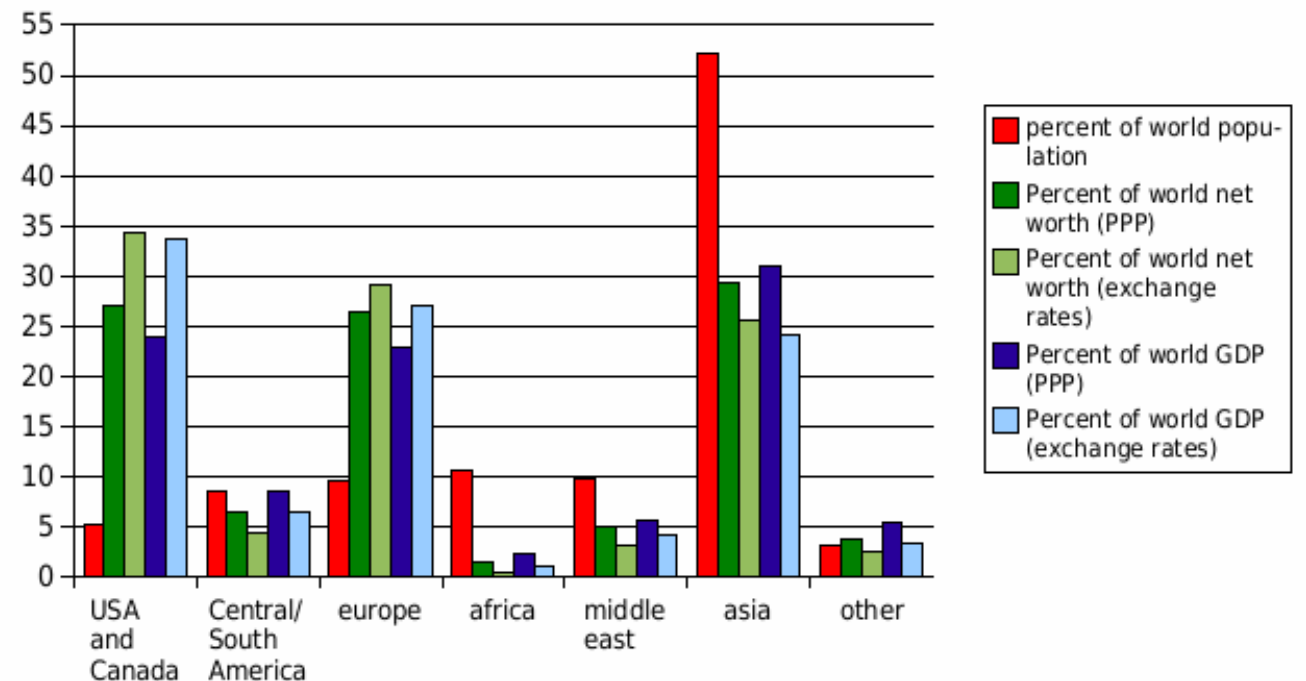
GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899

The unequal distribution of wealth remained high during this period. From 1860 to 1900, the wealthiest 2% of American households owned more than a third of the nation's wealth, while the top 10% owned roughly three-quarters of it. The bottom 40% had no wealth at all. In terms of property, the wealthiest 1% owned 51%, while the bottom 44% claimed 1.1%.

Global Wealth Distribution 2020 (Property)



World Distribution of Household Wealth, GDP, and Population in the Year 2000



GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899

Compare



Elon Reeve Musk; born June 28, 1971) is a businessman known for his key roles in Tesla, SpaceX, and Twitter (which he rebranded as X). Since 2025, he has been a senior advisor to United States president Donald Trump and the de facto head of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Musk is the wealthiest person in the world; as of March 2025, Forbes estimates his net worth to be US\$320 billion.

\$400,000,000 to \$700,000,000

Ailsa Mellon Bruce, New York, New York; inherited wealth: Gulf Oil Company, Alcoa.

Arthur Vining Davis, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Alcoa, Florida real estate.

H. L. Hunt, Dallas, Texas; independent oil operator.

Paul Mellon, Upperville, Virginia; inherited wealth.

Richard King Mellon, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; inherited wealth: Alcoa, Gulf Oil, Mellon Bank, etc.

John D. Rockefeller Jr., New York; inherited wealth: Standard Oil Trust.

Sarah Mellon, Pittsburgh; inherited wealth.

GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899

Compare

\$200,000,000 to \$400,000,000

Irénée du Pont, Wilmington, Delaware and Cuba; inherited wealth: E. I du Pont de Nemours & Co.

William du Pont Jr., Wilmington; inherited wealth: E. I du Pont de Nemours & Co.

Mrs. Frederick Guest, the former Amy Phipps, Palm Beach, Florida; inherited wealth from father Henry Phipps Jr., a Carnegie Steel executive.

Howard Hughes, Los Angeles; inherited wealth: Hughes Tool Company.

Joseph P. Kennedy, Boston, Massachusetts and New York; real estate.

Daniel K. Ludwig, New York; National Bulk Carriers.

Sid Richardson, Fort Worth, Texas; independent Oil operator.

Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., New York; General Motors Corporation.

\$100,000,000 to \$200,000,000

James Abercrombie, Houston, Texas; independent oil operator.

Vincent Astor, New York; inherited wealth: real estate.

Stephen Bechtel, San Francisco; construction, Bechtel Corporation.

William Blakley, Dallas; Braniff Airways, real estate.

Jacob Blaustein, Baltimore, Maryland; American Oil Company.

Lammot du Pont Copeland, Wilmington; E. I du Pont de Nemours & Co.

Clarence Dillon, New York; Dillon, Read & Co.

Doris Duke, New York and New Jersey; inherited wealth: tobacco.

Mrs. Alfred I. du Pont, Jacksonville, Florida and Wilmington; inherited wealth: St. Joe Paper Company, E. I du Pont de Nemours & Co.

Mrs. Edsel Ford, Detroit, Michigan; inherited wealth: Ford

GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899



Buying

Tesla Cars

**Keep
US**

MUSK FREE



GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899



GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899



**RISK OF
'TRUMPCESSION'
RISING,
ECONOMISTS SAY,
AS GLOBAL
MARKETS FALL**

**Donald Trump
Promise a
New Gilded Age**



GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899

For the first time since 2008, global household wealth in US dollar terms decreased on aggregate as well as on a per adult basis, both in nominal and real terms. Wealth per adult also recorded the second-largest reduction since 2000.

The 3.4% household wealth growth in 2022 was the lowest rate recorded in any year this century apart from 2008. It was also the only year this century, other than 2008, in which the total value of household financial assets declined even when exchange rate changes are discounted. The key contributors to this situation were the reduced value of financial assets, a stronger US dollar and elevated inflation.

Wealth increases among countries were more common overall than wealth losses, but the gains were generally small in magnitude.

Rare exceptions included Russia, Mexico, India and Brazil, which all saw higher aggregate private wealth in 2022.

On a per adult basis, Norway, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates stood out with higher increases of average private wealth.

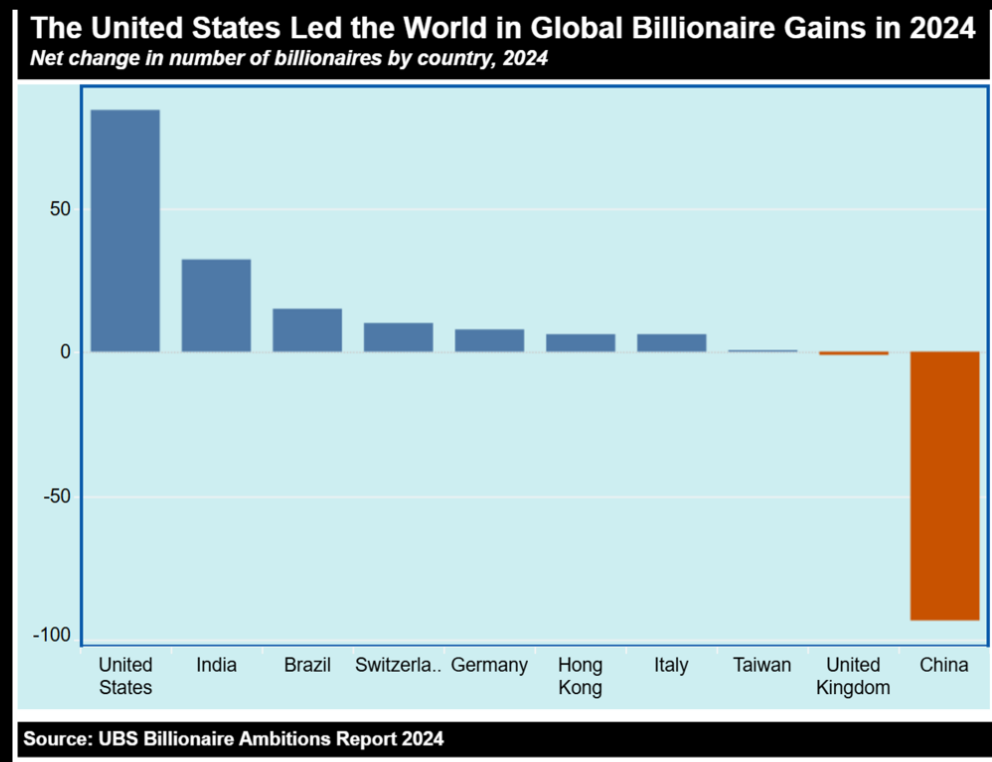
Interestingly, the countries that lost substantial wealth in 2022 were often those that made sizeable gains the year before.

GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899

The number of US dollar millionaires worldwide fell by 3.5 million during 2022 to total 59.4 million at year-end. This number includes 4.4 million "inflation millionaires¹" who would no longer qualify if the millionaire threshold were adjusted for inflation during 2022.

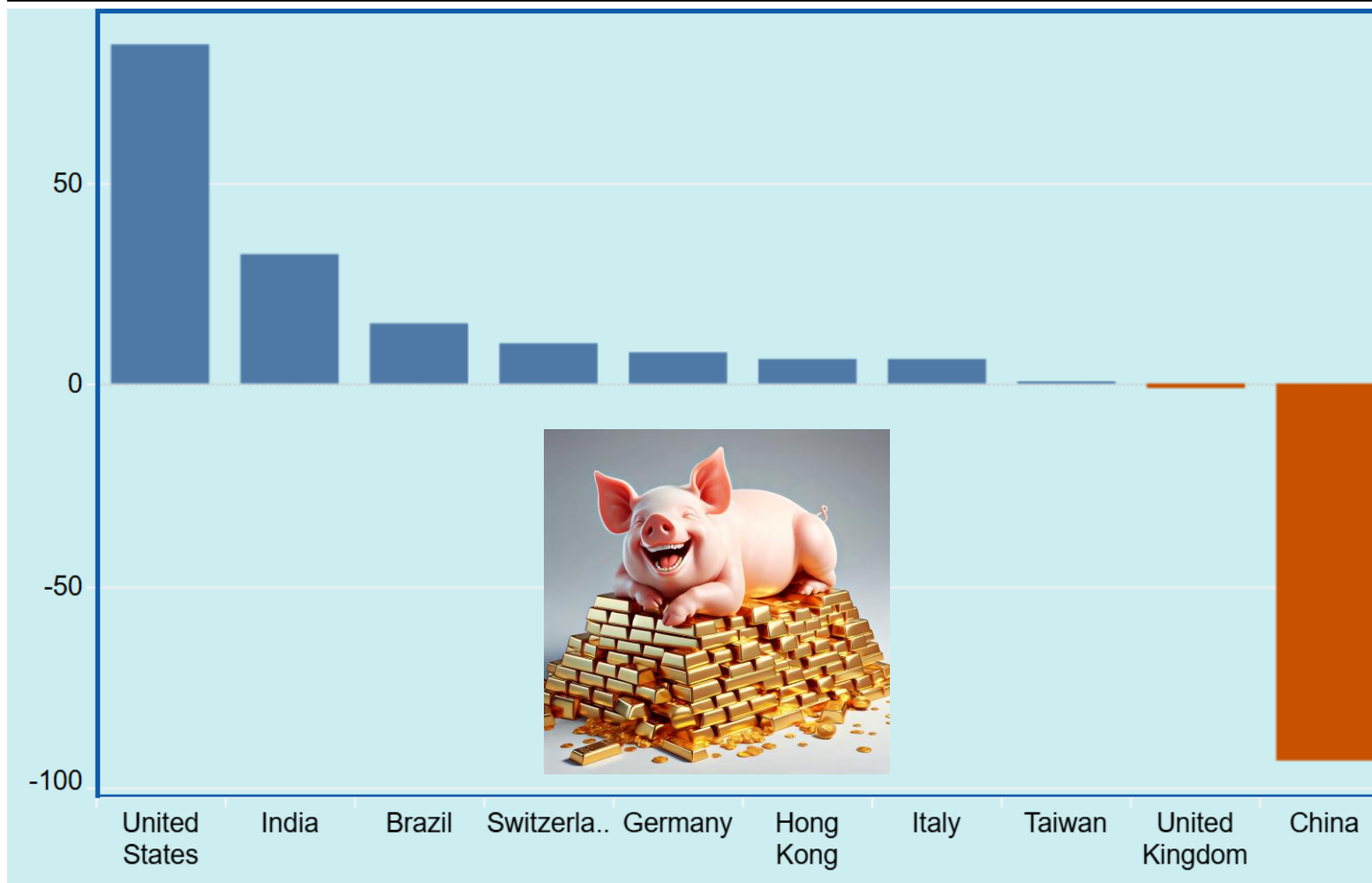
The ultra-high-net-worth (UHNW) group with wealth above USD 50 million had 22,490 fewer members by our estimate. And 2024:

Between 2015 and 2024, total billionaire wealth increased by 121% globally from USD 6.3 trillion to USD 14.0 trillion. For comparison, the MSCI AC World Index posted a smaller percentage gain of 73%. During this time, the number of billionaires grew by more than half, from 1,757 to 2,682. The peak was reached in 2021 when there were 2,686 billionaires. Since then, it has remained flat.



The United States Led the World in Global Billionaire Gains in 2024

Net change in number of billionaires by country, 2024



Source: UBS Billionaire Ambitions Report 2024

GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899

In 2015, the 100 wealthiest billionaires represented 32.4% of all billionaire wealth. Compare that to 2024, when the top 100 accounted for 36%.

North America hosts the greatest percentage of **the top 100 – 43%** live there. Just **21%** live in **Western Europe**, followed by **15%** in **Southeast Asia** (including India) and **8% in China**.

From 2015 to 2024, the number of female billionaires has grown from 190 to 344, a rise of 81%, mainly driven by the self-made. This compares with a rise of 49% in the male population, which remains far larger at 2,338 in 2024.

The average American equates being wealthy with a net worth of approximately \$2.5 million, up from \$2.2 million in 2023. Although the most recent data from the Federal Reserve reveals the average American household is a millionaire with a net worth of \$1.06 million. Based on the report from the Federal Reserve, the median net worth of U.S. households overall is \$192,900.

GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899

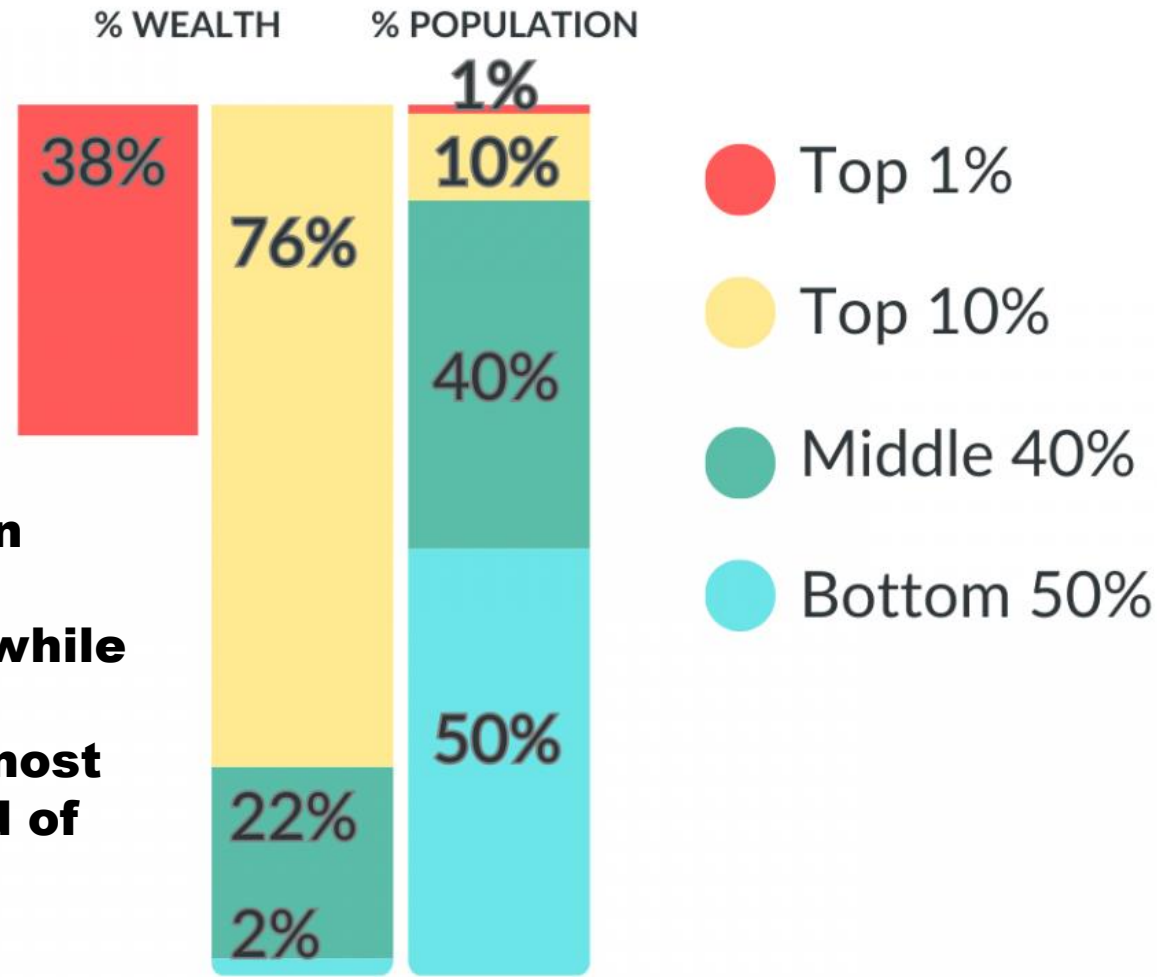
Wealth In America: The Numbers

- **Top 2% wealth:** According to Kiplinger, you'll need a net **worth of \$2.7 million to rank** (among the top 2% of Americans in 2025.)
 - **Top 5% wealth:** The next tier, the top 5%, needs a net **worth of around \$1.17 million.**
 - **Top 10% wealth:** The top 10% of the population is estimated to have a net worth of approximately **\$970,900.**
- In 2023**, the average American **retiree had about \$170,726** in retirement savings, a decrease from \$191,659 at the beginning of 2022. This 10% reduction is significantly lower than the recommended \$555,000. **Only 12% of retirees have achieved or exceeded this recommended savings amount.**



GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899

The top 10% own nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the world's wealth, while half the world's population is almost entirely deprived of wealth.



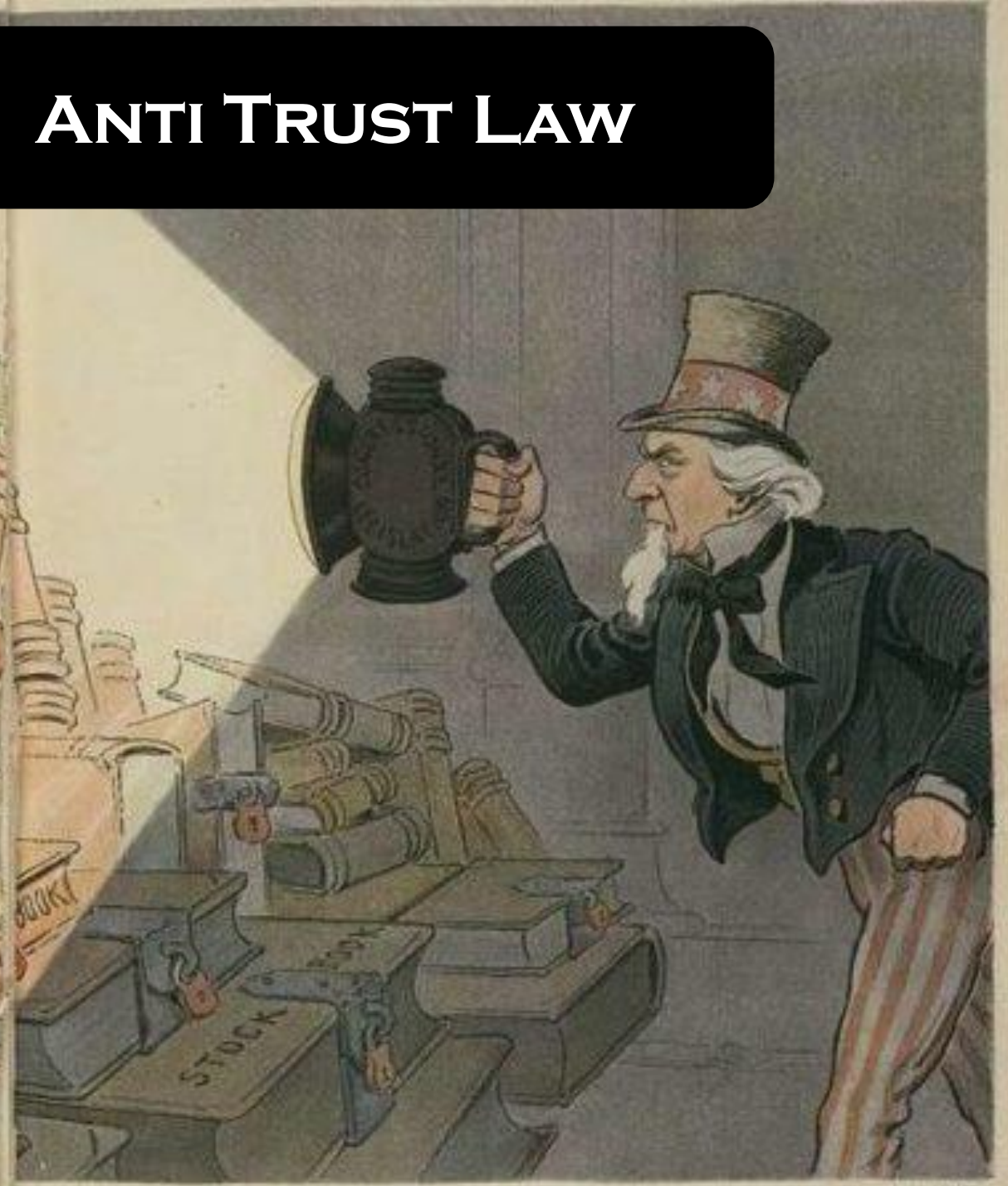
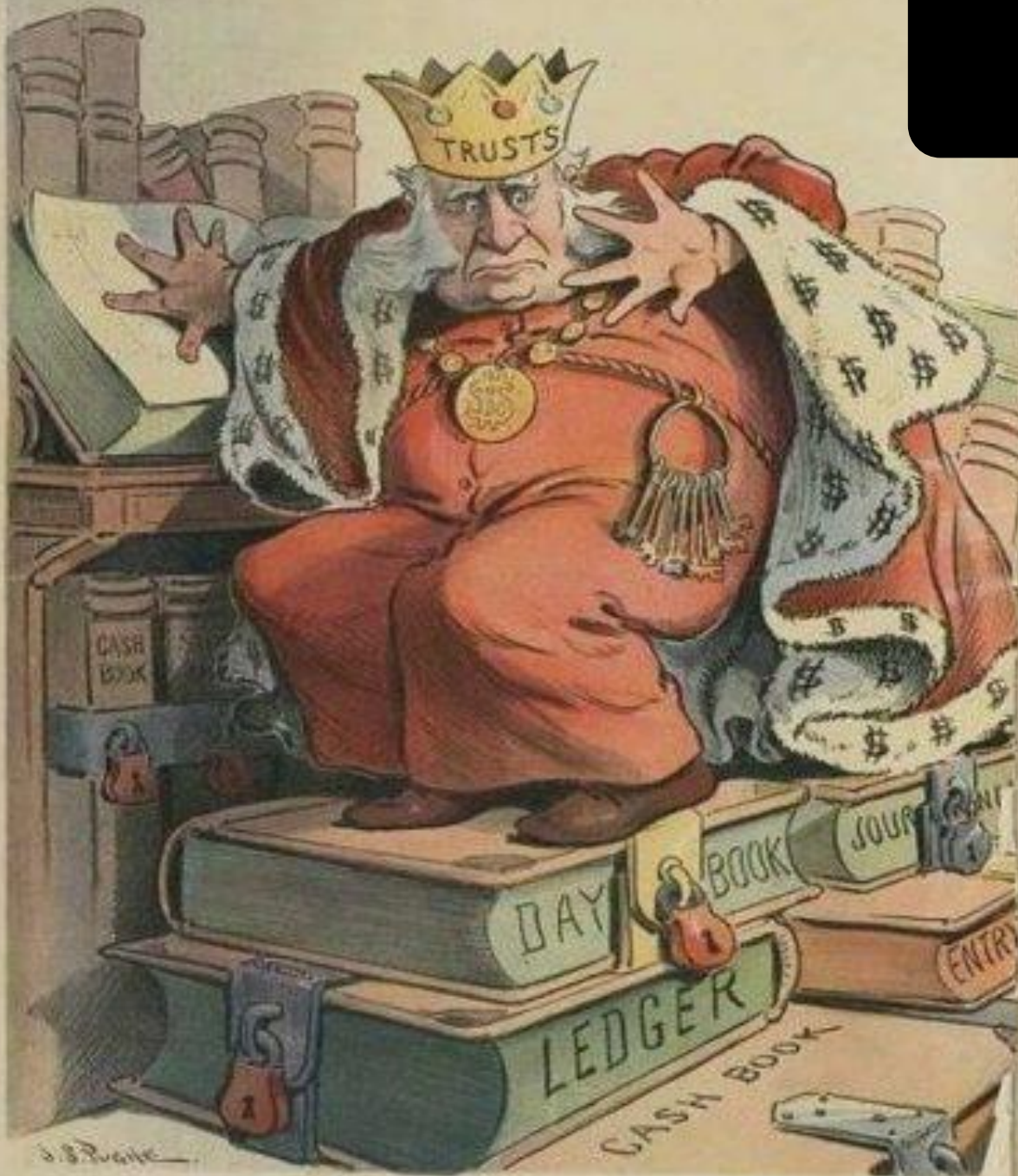
GILDED AGE 1870 - 1899



SHERMAN ANTITRUST ACT 1890

The Sherman Act broadly prohibits 1) anticompetitive agreements and 2) unilateral conduct that monopolizes or attempts to monopolize the relevant market. The Act authorizes the Department of Justice to bring suits to enjoin (i.e. prohibit) conduct violating the Act, and additionally authorizes private parties injured by conduct violating the Act to bring suits for treble damages (i.e. three times as much money in damages as the violation cost them). Over time, the federal courts have developed a body of law under the Sherman Act making certain types of anticompetitive conduct per se illegal, and subjecting other types of conduct to case-by-case analysis regarding whether the conduct unreasonably restrains trade.

ANTI TRUST LAW



THE SHERMAN ANTI – TRUST ACT OF 1890

The Sherman Anti-trust Act of 1890 was the first measure passed by the U.S. Congress to prohibit trusts. It was named for Senator John Sherman of Ohio, who was a chairman of the Senate finance committee and the Secretary of the Treasury under President Hayes.

Several states had passed similar laws, but they were limited to intrastate businesses. The Sherman Antitrust Act was based on the constitutional power of Congress to regulate interstate commerce. (For more background, see previous milestone documents: the Constitution, Gibbons v. Ogden, and the Interstate Commerce Act.)

The Sherman Anti-Trust Act passed the Senate by a vote of 51–1 on April 8, 1890, and the House by a unanimous vote of 242–0 on June 20, 1890. President Benjamin Harrison signed the bill into law on July 2, 1890.

A trust is an arrangement by which stockholders in several companies transfer their shares to a single set of trustees. In exchange, the stockholders receive a certificate entitling them to a specified share of the consolidated earnings of the jointly managed companies.

Toward the end of the 19th century, trusts come to dominate a number of major industries, destroying competition. For example, on January 2, 1882, the Standard Oil Trust was formed. Attorney Samuel Dodd of Standard Oil first had the idea of a trust. A board of trustees was set up, and all the Standard properties were placed in its hands.

Every stockholder received 20 trust certificates for each share of Standard Oil stock. All the profits of the component companies were sent to the nine trustees, who determined the dividends. The nine trustees elected the directors and officers of all the component companies. This allowed Standard Oil to function as a monopoly since the nine trustees ran all the component companies.

The Sherman Anti-Trust Act authorized the federal government to institute proceedings against trusts in order to dissolve them. Any combination "in the form of trust or otherwise that was in restraint of trade or commerce among the several states, or with foreign nations" was declared illegal. Persons forming such combinations were subject to fines of \$5,000 and a year in jail. Individuals and companies suffering losses because of trusts were permitted to sue in federal court for triple damages. The act was designed to restore competition, but it was loosely worded and failed to define such critical terms as "trust," "combination," "conspiracy," and "monopoly." Five years later, the Supreme Court dismantled the act in *United States v. E. C. Knight Company* (1895). The Court ruled that the American Sugar Refining Company, one of the defendants in the case, had not violated the law even though the company controlled about 98% of all sugar refining in the United States.

